

Rural development policies and artisanal gold mining in Mozambique: dilemmas and challenges*

Stefaan Dondeyne

Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences
University of Leuven, Belgium - stefaan_dondeyne@yahoo.co.uk

&

Eduardo Ndunguru

Provincial Directorate for Mining and Energy, Manica Province,
Chimoio, Mozambique - eduardondunguro@hotmail.com

Abstract

Despite Mozambique's great natural resource wealth and strong economic growth, rural poverty remains high countrywide. In the period 2007-2011, gold output was between 600 and 900 kg per year, corresponding to an annual value of 19 to 29 million USD. As there are no active industrial mining companies, this production is solely from the 60 000 people involved in the sector. For rural people in Mozambique, artisanal gold mining is the most direct source of monetary income. As the mining is largely uncontrolled, the siltation of rivers and pollution with heavy metals goes unchecked while the prohibition of artisanal mining, in and around conservation areas has been counterproductive. The government's strategy consists of promoting improved technologies and encouraging artisanal miners to establish themselves as businesses by creating miners associations. This has proved successful where the ore allows for sufficiently long exploitation. In practice this is where reef gold occurs. Where placer gold is mined, given the variable nature of colluvial and alluvial deposits, accompanying mining activities are relatively short-lived at such sites. In line with the country's current decentralisation and democratisation policies in relation to rural development, we therefore suggest that local authorities and community representatives must play an expanded role in enforcing good mining practices.

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